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Research Article

Rethinking Loyalty and Competence in Presidential Appointments

Abstract: *Studies in presidential appointments, particularly principal-agent models, posit that presidents employ a top-down strategy to control the bureaucracy, one that promotes loyalty over competence. However, many studies have two critical limitations: (1) treating loyalty and competence as binary constructs and (2) focusing only on presidential nomination and Senate confirmation (PAS) appointments. In this article, the authors construct a continuous measure of loyalty and competence to determine how much loyalty or competence an appointee offers a president and examine other appointment tools—Senior Executive Service (SES), Schedule C, and presidential appointments—that allow presidents to influence different levels of the bureaucracy. Findings show that presidents are more likely to reward competence with their PAS and SES appointments. In addition, few appointees score high on both loyalty and competence, explaining why presidents generally must make a trade-off between loyalty and competence.*

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Evidence for Practice

- A sole focus on presidential nomination and Senate confirmation (PAS) appointments provides a limited and distorted view of the president's appointment strategy.
- PAS, Senior Executive Service (SES), Schedule C, and presidential appointments are all important parts of the president's overall top-down strategy to influence the federal bureaucracy.
- While finding people who are loyal to the president's policy agenda is important, with PAS appointments, presidents balance the desire for loyalty with the identification of candidates who have the capacity to competently carry out the president's policy goals.
- Though there is no observable difference between George W. Bush and Barack Obama on the loyalty dimension, Obama placed a greater emphasis on appointee competence than Bush.
- There is a loyalty-competence trade-off; only in a small number of cases do appointees demonstrate high levels of both loyalty and competence.

Which criteria do presidents employ when they select candidates for appointment to the federal bureaucracy? Top-down theories such as the principal-agent model posit that presidents have a preference for loyalty over competence. Yet many principal-agent studies examine only presidential nomination and Senate confirmation (PAS) appointees, including cabinet members and appointees to specific regulatory agencies (e.g., Moe 1985; Wood 1990; Wood and Waterman 1991). While Krause and O'Connell (2016) provide compelling evidence over time regarding PAS appointees, what do we know about lower-level appointments that do not require Senate confirmation? Given the inexorable movement toward rewarding presidential loyalty that Richard Nathan (1975) identified almost 50 years ago, a detailed analysis of the qualifications of White House personnel and Senior Executive Service (SES) and Schedule C appointments is both wise and necessary. Our analysis goes deeper into the bureaucracy, examining what Lewis and Waterman (2013) refer to as "invisible presidential appointments."

A focus on appointments is important because the principal-agent studies cited earlier found appointments to be one of the strongest determinants of political control of the bureaucracy. Yet scandals such as Watergate and Iran-Contra have taught us that loyalty without competence is a combustible prescription. Anecdotally, presidents prefer loyalty over competence. But how much loyalty do they prefer? Do they merely merely substitute loyalty for competence, or do they benefit concomitantly from some combination of the two qualities? Dichotomous measures of loyalty and competence are of limited value in understanding these questions. They tell us only *whether* a trade-off occurred, but not *how* that trade-off occurred. Our major contribution in this article is that we employ continuous measures

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of loyalty and competence, thus providing measures of how much loyalty and/or competence a particular appointee offers. Our results using this new measure demonstrate that the relationship between loyalty and competence is more complex and interesting than previously thought.

Creating continuous measures of loyalty and competence is but one step. We also examine four types of presidential appointments. Loyalist PAS appointments provide presidents with a means of promoting top-down political control of the bureaucracy, a key construct in principal-agent models of the appointment process. Still, because the Senate must confirm PAS appointees, theoretically speaking, presidents are more likely to reward competence with their higher-level PAS positions than they are with lower-level appointees who do not require Senate confirmation. And, as Abramson (2012) notes, confirmations of more competent appointees (particularly to foreign policy positions) moves faster through the Congress than those of loyalty-based appointees.

Overall, we find that once we consider the loyalty-competence nexus in continuous terms, the president's strategic choices are dynamic and complex, varying across appointment types. We begin by reviewing existing works on presidential appointments. We then offer a theory on the constraints on the loyalty-competence nexus. Next, we describe the empirical approach used in measuring appointee loyalty and competence as a continuous variable. Then, we offer an initial assessment of appointee loyalty and competence based on 3,366 appointments made by George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Finally, we conclude with some thoughts on the loyalty-competence nexus in presidential appointments and directions for future research.

Studies in Presidential Appointments

Determining the right person to carry out the president's policy agendas is crucial to the success of any administration. As Clay Johnson, George W. Bush's first director of presidential personnel, noted, "This [process] is not a beauty contest. The goal is to pick the person who has the greatest chance of accomplishing what the principal wants done… . After the strongest candidate(s) has been identified, assess the political wisdom of the selection, and adjust accordingly" (quoted in Lewis 2008, 27). While identifying the appropriate candidate for the position is the principal goal, the difficult question is the criteria upon which the selections are made.

Because presidents exercise their appointment power in an attempt to control the bureaucracy (see Knott and Miller 1987; Lewis 2008; Menzel 1983; Moe 1985; Patterson and Pfiffner 2001; Stewart and Cromartie 1982; Waterman 1989; Wood 1990; Wood and Anderson 1993; Wood and Waterman 1991), scholars have long argued that at least some level of competence is required in presidential appointments (Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Gailmard and Patty 2007; Huber and McCarty 2004; Lewis 2008; Nathan 1983; Waterman 1989; Wood and Waterman 1991). For instance, Moe's (1985) work posits that appointments are a vital technique for influencing bureaucratic outcomes and that presidents do so by valuing appointees demonstrating "responsive competence" over "neutral competence" (Heclo 1975, 1977; see also Kaufman 1956). Overall, these works recognize that because the president's policy agenda requires a bureaucracy capable of capable implementation, presidents should prioritize the appointee competence, or the "ability to manage, design, and effectively carry out new programs, implement key legislation, or deliver services" (Edwards 2001, 15). But is competence enough?

Evidence from recent administrations suggests that presidents place a premium on an appointees' loyalty to the president's policy goals. By loyalty, we mean the appointee's fealty to the president's policy preferences. As Peter Baker (2014, 86) writes of George W. Bush's appointment strategy, "Perhaps the most important lesson was the insistence on complete loyalty." Recent evidence from the Donald Trump administration also indicates that loyalty is the crucial factor in appointee qualifications (Yglesias 2017), even as delays in the pace of appointments impede the progress of Trump's policy agenda (Lewis 2017) and as the administration struggles to fill top posts or leaves them in the hands of an acting administrator (Baker and Davis 2017). Supporting these anecdotal accounts are studies by presidency scholars that examine presidential appointments on the basis of loyalty. For instance, scholars describe how presidents evaluate potential candidates for office based on such factors as whether they worked for key legislators and committees and their political connections, such as their work for a campaign or a particular political party (see, e.g., Lewis and Waterman 2013; Mackenzie 1981; Pfiffner 1996; Weko 1995). Parsneau's (2013) study of subcabinet positions from 1961 to 2006 found that presidents appoint significantly more loyalists to these positions than individuals with more job experience. Because recalcitrant public employees may pursue guerrilla activities within the bureaucracy to undermine the president's policies (Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander 2020), it becomes imperative for presidents to identify the candidates most likely to carry out their policy agenda.

In addition to works that focus on loyalty or competence, other scholars concentrate directly on a more normative question: who should presidents appoint? These scholars prescribe the characteristics that should be of most value to presidents. For example, Hess (1976) recommends that presidents appoint individuals with prior federal government experience to the cabinet as a means of promoting competence over loyalty, while Nathan (1975) urges presidents to reward loyalty by elevating loyalist lower-level officials to more significant policy posts. To the contrary, Waterman (1989) warns that a reliance on loyalty alone can undermine presidential influence in the long run. Gallo and Lewis (2012) demonstrate that programs headed by individuals with a main experience in political campaigns perform worst on Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) evaluations. Meanwhile, Hollibaugh (2015, 1) finds that a trade-off between ideology and performance is "difficult, if not impossible," and Moynihan and Roberts (2010), while they find that loyalty triumphed over competence in the George W. Bush administration, also acknowledge that it led to lower levels of agency performance. Still, the Bush administration made the appointment of loyalists *the key consideration* (Warshaw 2006), establishing a centralized personnel structure to accomplish this goal. Abramson (2012) notes that the confirmation of more competent appointees (particularly to foreign policy positions) moves faster through Congress than that of loyalty-based appointees.

Though it has yielded valuable insights into the strategies of presidential appointments, the literature has two critical weaknesses that we address in this article. First, while existing works raise questions about the relative importance of appointee loyalty versus competence in presidential appointments, they discuss these two concepts in largely dichotomous terms. That is, is the candidate for appointment a loyalist or not? Is the candidate competent or not? While the answers to these questions can yield important information about the appointee, a simple dichotomy likely masks important variations across various appointees and limits our ability to better understand the nuances of the appointment process. Developing continuous measures of loyalty and competence is critical since many studies contend that at least some level of competence is required in presidential appointments (Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Gailmard and Patty 2007; Huber and McCarty 2004; Lewis 2008; Nathan 1983; Waterman 1989; Wood and Waterman 1991). Auer (2008) notes that there are variations from administration to administration with regard to the preference for loyalty (though he only examines environmental appointments). If we treat the loyalty-competence nexus as a mere binary choice, presidents only have a choice between rewarding loyalty/responsiveness or competence. We contend that the choice is more complex than this simple dichotomy, particularly when we turn our attention to a larger and more complex research design that includes multiple agencies and different types of presidential appointments. Therefore, we require a measure capable of determining *how much responsiveness* and *how much competence* an appointee offers a particular president.

Second, while scholars such as Light (1995) note the importance of Schedule C and SES appointments to increase presidential influence throughout the bureaucracy, relatively few empirical studies have addressed this issue (e.g., Lewis 2008), largely because of a relative dearth of data on these appointments. Tracking non-PAS appointments is of special importance because, as Lewis and Waterman (2013) argue, these seemingly insignificant and "invisible" appointees deserve more attention because they are of increasing significance to presidents pursuing a bureaucratic political control strategy. In addition, Lewis (2008, 97) notes that "focusing on PAS positions also ignores the broader universe of appointed positions, which is where politicization usually occurs." Consequently, an analysis of only PAS positions provides a partial indication of a president's broader appointment strategy. Furthermore, without the inclusion of lower-level appointments, it is difficult to impossible to provide a baseline to evaluate whether presidents are more likely to reward competence in their PAS appointees. A fuller, more complete picture of bureaucratic control benefits from an analysis of presidential appointments at different levels.

A Theory of the Loyalty-Competence Nexus

Presidents face various constraints when making appointments to the federal bureaucracy. For instance, King and Riddlesperger (2015) argue that in addition to considering an appointee's qualifications, presidents are concerned with diversity. Bertelli and Feldmann (2007) demonstrate that presidents select individuals who can offset the influence of interest groups. Presidents make patronage appointments as rewards for support or for coalition building with other key political principals or to reward contributors (Mackenzie 1981; Patterson 2008; Patterson and Pfiffner 2001; Tolchin and Tolchin 1971, 2010; Waterman, Bretting, and Stewart 2015). Recent scholarly works also explain how presidents match certain appointee background characteristics with specific federal bureaucratic positions (Hollibaugh, Horton, and Lewis 2014; Krause and O'Connell 2016; Lewis 2011; Lewis and Waterman 2013) or with specific agencies (Parsneau 2013). And presidents often encounter impediments at the recruitment stage, as some candidates find the Federal Bureau of Investigation background check and other requirements too problematic to accept a presidential appointment (Mackenzie 2011; Sullivan 2009), thus limiting the overall pool of potential presidential appointees.

Still, all else being equal, the qualifications of the appointees—their personal loyalty to the president and/or their competency to succeed at their appointed positions—remain the most important factors in presidential appointments. As the earlier quote by Clay Johnson reminds us, the singular focus of the presidential personnel office is to identify the strongest candidates who will accomplish the president's policy goals. For the George W. Bush administration, "all resumes and applications had to be sent via the Internet, electronically instead of through the mail by the bushel. In August, three months before the election, the team set up a website and developed the software … Some 90,000 applications arrived within a few weeks" (Patterson 2008, 97). The résumés and the candidates for all appointment positions were then evaluated by the White House Office of Personnel Management, thus ensuring that all appointments at different levels served the president's purposes (Patterson 2008). Under the Obama administration, the Office of Performance and Personnel Management performed a similar function.

The centralization of the appointment process through *a single White House office* is important, for it provides the institutional capability for a presidential administration to identify and evaluate the loyalty or competence of a wide range of potential job candidates for different appointment types. If appointments were handled in a nonsystematic manner in a variety of institutional settings, then we would expect wide variations in a president's appointment strategy. Centralization means that presidents who desire loyalty or competence have a greater institutional capacity to identify and then appoint individuals with these qualities at different levels throughout the bureaucracy. As Richard Nixon said to members of his cabinet, "We can't depend on people who believe in another philosophy of government to give us their undivided loyalty or their best work" (quoted in Edwards 2001, 14). Yet, while we agree that presidents prefer loyalty in their appointments, we do not know how much loyalty presidents are willing to accept if in fact they must make a choice between loyalty and competence. As Hollibaugh (2015, 20) notes,

> Executives want agencies to be both politically responsive and administratively competent. However, when the executive is constrained by the legislature with whom she disagrees on policy, then such an agency may be unattainable. In this case, the executive's next-best strategy may be to sacrifice some political responsiveness and maintain maximal agency competence, effectively inducing (relatively) neutral competence at the agency level.

In other words, it is not sufficient to say whether presidents prefer loyalty or competence: the reality is that they often make trade-offs between the two that are subject to constitutional and political constraints. In addition, constraints on presidential appointments likely vary across different types of presidential appointments. Nathan (1975) argues that loyal lower-level appointees are excellent fodder for promotion to higher-level positions. Nathan's idea of low- to higher-level promotion also provides an important reason to examine lower-level presidential appointments, such as those at the SES and Schedule C level. Likewise, Light (1995) argues that an examination of SES and Schedule C appointments is warranted because presidents are more likely to use these types of appointments for political purposes, such as getting loyalists into specific agencies or rewarding party and campaign workers with patronage positions (see also Hollibaugh, Horton, and Lewis 2014).

Ideally, presidents desire appointees who possess high levels of both loyalty and competence. Indeed, staffers regularly ensure that potential appointees implement the president's policies by rewarding loyalty. For example, consider the following account from Patterson (2008, 100):

> If a cabinet secretary came in with his own list of prospective deputies, [Clay] Johnson [director of presidential personnel for George W. Bush] would be reassuring: "We would be glad to look at your people, and I would be shocked if some of these people aren't fantastic for the positions that you propose." But, Johnson explained, "we had to be comfortable that cabinet appointees would be implementing the president's priorities and policies, and not necessarily the secretary's."

These attempts to rein in the appointment process by the White House can cause problems and tensions between the White House and the executive departments, even if the incoming president is of the same political party as the incumbent. As Chase Untermeyer, President George H. W. Bush's personnel director reflected,

> The one thing I would clearly do differently was not to assume that cabinet secretaries were going to manage the firing of the Reagan Schedule Cs and the hiring of the [George H. W.] Bush Schedule Cs in a kind and gentle way. I just assumed they would, and I assumed wrong… . Secretary [___] … who was appointed by Reagan and retained by [George H. W.] Bush … was basically waiting for the day when he could kick them all out… . This happened in lots of the departments… . The truest believers of Ronald Reagan … were abused. They were not treated in a dignified and polite and sensitive way… . That one area was dreadfully handled. (quoted in Patterson 2008, 100)

Untermeyer's comment suggests while presidents may appoint appoint loyalists to lower-level positions to make sure that higher-level PAS appointees adhere to the president's programmatic agenda—a bottom-up method of undersight (rather than oversight), this approach to bureaucratic management often results in considerable trust issues between the departments and the White House. Under George W. Bush, the White House's attempts to manage the selection of prospective appointees extended beyond just the level of cabinet secretaries and their deputies. As Patterson (2008, 101) notes, the George W. Bush administration continued a long tradition of "prohibiting any office or person from making *any* personnel commitments without the advance consent of the director of the presidential personnel office." Further, approval from the presidential personnel office was required for "all non-career appointments, including those in the Senior Executive Service and all the Schedule Cs, even though the formal appointing authority is technically in the hands of the department heads" (101). While presidents prefer loyalty, presidents arguably are best served by appointees who rate highly on both loyalty and competence. The question then becomes, when presidents make strategic appointment choices, is there a trade-off between loyalty and competence?

Our theory is premised on the idea that presidents face different *constraints* with different types of appointment types and that these constraints impact the choices presidents make. As is well documented, there is a constitutional constraint on PAS appointments: the Senate confirmation process.[1] We posit that because presidents must consider whether a nominee will pass muster with the Senate, PAS appointees should have the highest level of competence and the lowest level of loyalty. Light (1995) asserts that SES and Schedule C appointees were established to increase presidential influence at lower levels of the bureaucracy. They do not require Senate confirmation. They do differ in terms of potential constraints placed on the president. As the SES website notes, "These leaders possess well-honed executive skills and share a broad perspective on government and a public service commitment that is grounded in the Constitution." It also notes, "Members of the SES serve in key positions just below these appointees and the rest of the Federal workforce."[2] Consequently, SES appointees are meant to exhibit competence, but their positions in the federal hierarchy also provide an incentive for presidents to reward loyalty. Hence, we posit that SES appointees should exhibit higher levels of loyalty than PAS appointees. They should also exhibit lower levels of competence than PAS appointees because they do not require Senate confirmation.

Schedule C appointees are lower-level appointees, often described as college kids who get a reward for working with a campaign. They exhibit the lowest level of constraint of any presidential appointment type. For that reason, they should exhibit the highest levels of loyalty and the lowest levels of competence, representing two important baselines against which we can compare other appointment types.

We also include a fourth type of appointment: PA (presidential) appointments, which are mainly in the White House, although there are some PA appointees in other parts of the federal bureaucracy. The constraint here is not as obvious as it is with PAS or SES appointees. Presidents certainly prefer loyalty in these appointments, yet unfettered loyalty can lead to scandal, as was the case in both Watergate and Iran-Contra. Therefore, the very public nature of these positions provides a constraint, suggesting that presidents must balance loyalty with some level of competence. The same is true for cabinet positions. However, SES and Schedule C positions are less likely to draw public attention. Still, presidents prefer high levels of loyalty among their White House staff, as well.

These appointees should exhibit higher levels of loyalty than SES and PAS appointments but greater levels of competence. Figure 1 provides an illustration of our theoretical expectations.

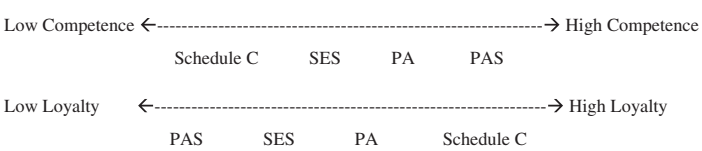
Before we can proceed with a test of our thesis, we first introduce our operationalization of loyalty and competence.

Data and Method

Examining the full range of presidential appointments to the bureaucracy is important because, as Lewis (2008, 22–24) notes, there were 1,137 PAS positions in the executive branch in 2004, with approximately 945 of these in policy-making positions; 6,811 SES officials, with 674 of these presidential appointments; and 1,596 Schedule C appointments. Patterson (2008, 93–94) finds a similar distribution of appointments. Consequently, if we examine only PAS appointments, we will overlook many of the appointments that presidents make. An examination of a broader range of appointments is therefore in order and a central object of this research. It also requires continuous measures of loyalty and competence.

In examining loyalty and competence, scholars long have considered the background characteristics of executive personnel (Herring 1936; Macmahon and Millett 1939; Nixon 2004; Stanley, Mann, and Doig 1967). Others have used personal interviews and surveys to measure appointee attributes (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981; Aberbach and Rockman 1976, 2000; Fisher 1987; Maranto 1993; Maranto and Hult 2004; Michaels 1997). Yet most of this work, including recent empircal research (e.g., Krause and O'Connell 2016; Parsneau 2013), has been confined to PAS appointees, for reasons of both prominence and limited data on lower-level appointees. There are notable exceptions, however. Aberbach and Rockman (1976, 2000) include PAS and noncareer bureaucrats, such as SES appointees, in their surveys of the bureaucratic web (see also Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981). Krause and O'Connell (2016) and Lewis and Waterman (2013) use data from appointee résumés. These scholars describe how presidents evaluate potential candidates for office on such factors as whether they worked for key legislators and committees, for campaigns, or for a particular political party (see, e.g., Krause and O'Connell 2016; Lewis and Waterman 2013; Mackenzie 1981; Pfiffner 1996; Weko 1995), as well as their prior experience in government and other task-related activities. Scholars have therefore identified methods that can be used to develop continuous measures of loyalty and competence.

We build on these prior studies. Ouyang, Hagland, and Waterman (2017) create a data set consisting of 3,366 résumés of presidential



Notes: This figure illustrates our theoretical expectations on the constraints on presidential appointments across appointment types.

Figure 1 Constraints on Presidential Appointments

appointees from the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, acquired through Freedom of Information Act requests.[3] These résumés are of particular value in addressing the loyalty-competence nexus because they contain *the self-identified skill sets* (such as task experience) and *prior experience* (as an appointee, experience in the executive branch, working for a campaign or a political party, etc.) of each appointee. These variables correspond directly to concepts identified in the competence-loyalty literature, such as Krause and O'Connell's (2016) analysis of federal PAS employees.

Competence is generally associated with one's expertise with a particular task, such as a civil rights lawyer serving in the Department of Justice. On the other hand, having worked in campaigns or in the White House or for a particular political party is associated with loyalty to the president. To test these associations, our coding of the résumés identified 17 binary indicators of appointee qualifications. A subsequent analysis employing various techniques, such as factor analysis, identified the following variables as related to loyalty: (1) worked in Congress; (2) last job political; (3) worked on the president's transition team; (4) worked in the White House; (5) worked for the party; (6) worked for the president's campaign; and (7) worked on the president's inauguration team. The variables that loaded on the competence factor are (1) previous agency experience; (2) previous experience in the executive branch; (3) was previously an appointee; (4) elected office experience; (5) public management experience; (6) state-level experience; (7) private management experience; (8) nonprofit management experience; (9) task expertise; and (10) subject area expertise.[4] Table 1 presents the breakdown of Bush and Obama appointees in the data set by federal agency and by appointment type.[5]

Table 1 presents an overview of our data set by agency and appointment type. As can be seen, the agencies include cabinet departments, regulatory agencies, boards, and commissions—that is, a wide variety of types of federal agencies. These data are rich and informative because they allow us not only to examine the variables underlying loyalty and competence in a variety of federal agencies, as we shall demonstrate, but also to examine these concepts as continuous variables. Hence, we can examine *how much loyalty or competence* each individual appointee offers. For example, an individual might be a former campaign worker or an aide to a legislator, but they also might have prior task experience related to their appointment. If so, this individual would exhibit evidence of both loyalty and competence. However, an appointee may have only past experience in a campaign, in which case they would rate high on loyalty and low on competence. Measuring the two concepts in this manner allows us to compare the relative loyalty and competence of PAS, SES, and Schedule C appointees. As a further means of comparison, we also include individuals who serve in the White House and who do not require confirmation and "serve at the pleasure of the president," which we designate as PA appointments. Finally, we should point out that of the 3,366 résumés in our data set, we lack the exact appointment type for 1,151 appointees. Most likely, these are either Schedule C or PA appointments, since PAS and SES positions are much easier to identify.

To analyze our continuous measures of loyalty and competence, we follow the approach developed by Ouyang, Haglund, and Waterman (2017) and apply the measurement model component

Table 1 Bush and Obama Appointees by Agency and Appointment Type

Agency	PAS	SES	SC	PA	Unknown	Total
African Development Foundation	7	0	0	0	0	7
Central Intelligence Agency	1	0	0	0	5	6
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	0	4	18	0	0	22
Corporation for National and Community Service	2	0	0	0	1	3
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	4	0	0	0	0	4
Department of Agriculture	0	1	4	0	0	5
Department of Commerce	0	1	3	0	4	8
Department of Defense	22	4	99	0	4	129
Department of Education	8	44	230	1	20	303
Department of Energy	7	4	69	0	677	757
Department of Health and Human Services	6	45	58	0	18	127
Department of Homeland Security	5	5	18	0	28	56
Department of Housing and Urban Development	0	1	1	0	1	3
Department of Justice	3	30	26	1	14	74
Department of Labor	11	0	239	33	3	286
Department of State	0	0	0	0	4	4
Department of the Air Force	4	3	1	0	8	16
Department of the Army	0	0	1	0	0	1
Department of the Interior	2	54	129	0	123	308
Department of the Navy	9	9	15	0	26	59
Department of the Treasury	23	3	61	3	38	128
Department of Transportation	31	71	101	1	26	230
Environmental Protection Agency	0	0	4	0	2	6
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	3	0	0	0	0	3
Executive Office of the President	13	36	67	73	37	226
Export-Import Bank of the United States	0	0	10	0	1	11
Farm Credit Administration	0	0	0	0	8	8
Federal Aviation Administration	0	1	0	0	0	1
Federal Communications Commission	0	19	22	0	5	46
Federal Election Commission	0	0	0	0	10	10
Federal Labor Relations Authority	1	0	0	0	0	1
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	1	1	0	0	0	2
Federal Reserve Board	2	0	1	0	0	3
General Services Administration	4	45	128	0	1	178
Millennium Challenge Corporation	0	0	0	0	1	1
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	1	14	30	0	12	57
National Credit Union Association	0	0	8	0	0	8
National Endowments for the Arts	0	3	2	0	0	5
National Endowments for the Humanities	31	3	4	0	0	38
National Labor Relations Board	1	1	0	0	2	4
National Mediation Board	0	0	3	0	0	3
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	0	1	0	0	4	5
Office of Government Ethics	1	0	0	0	0	1
Office of Personnel Management	1	0	1	0	0	2
Office of the Director of National Intelligence	1	0	0	0	0	1
Overseas Private Investment Corporation	43	0	0	0	1	44
Peace Corps	0	0	0	0	38	38
Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation	2	0	5	0	2	9
Postal Regulatory Commission	5	0	0	0	12	17
Securities and Exchange Commission	0	0	2	0	5	7
Small Business Administration	2	14	29	0	1	46
Social Security Administration	0	0	1	0	0	1
U.S. Agency for International Development	0	0	1	0	1	2
U.S. International Trade Commission	5	1	13	0	6	25
Unknown agency affiliation	2	6	11	0	2	21
Total	264	424	1,415	112	1,151	3,366

Notes: This table presents the breakdown of Bush and Obama appointees by appointment type across federal agencies (in alphabetical order).

of the Bayesian structural equations modeling (BSEM) framework to estimate appointee loyalty and competence. This approach is a generalization of the confirmatory factor models commonly used in public administration and political science. It offers a number of advantages.

As confirmation factor models are designed to deal specifically with the relationships between observed indicators and latent constructs, it is well suited to analyze how appointee characteristics on their résumés load onto the loyalty and competence latent dimensions, respectively. One especially attractive feature of confirmatory factor models is that "its greater emphasis on theory and hypothesis testing, the CFA framework provides many other analytic possibilities that are not available in [other methods]" (Brown 2006, 1). Second, a Bayesian approach offers greater flexibility in modeling complex data structures along with the incorporation of prior knowledge (Lee 2007). This approach allows each observed item in the confirmatory component of the BSEM

to have its own unique variance, we can better isolate what each observed items have in common, as well as assessing the underlying relationships across items. Third, by separating the shared variance across observed indicators from the unique variances of each individual item, we can better account for measurement error in the data. Finally, in contrast to other scaling approaches such as item response theory models commonly used in political science, the BSEM framework more appropriately scales appointees on the underlying, latent loyalty and competence dimensions (Ouyang, Haglund, and Waterman 2017).

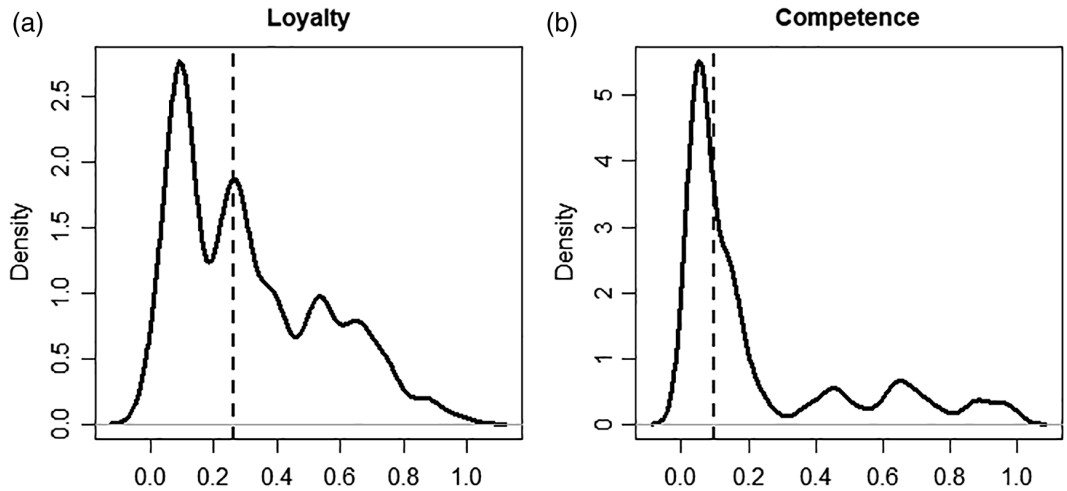
Appointee Loyalty and Competence: A First Look

In this section, we begin with an overview of appointee loyalty and competence, based on a two-factor confirmatory model.[6] Figure 2 presents the distributions of all 3,366 Bush and Obama appointees across 51 federal agencies (kernel densities). Larger values on the x-axis indicate higher levels of loyalty (competence). Figure 2(a) presents the distribution of appointees on the latent loyalty dimension. The measure is continuous, ranging from 0 to 1, with 0 being the lowest possible level of loyalty (or competence) and 1 the highest. These values were derived from a two-factor confirmatory model and therefore represent the factor score for each individual appointee, based entirely on the qualifications identified on the résumés submitted to the White House Personnel Office. As such, it represents the appointee's factor score based on the qualifications that we identified earlier as having loaded on the loyalty and competence scores. This measure therefore provides a basis for us to compare individual appointees in terms of *how much loyalty* and *how much competence* they offer in relationship to all other appointees.

To facilitate interpretations, we rescaled our measures of loyalty and competence to between 0 and 1, where 0 represents the "least loyal (competence)" appointee in our data set and 1 the "most loyal (competence)." The question of how loyal Bush and Obama appointees were immediately raises an interesting dynamic. As shown in figure 2(a), the distribution of Bush and Obama appointees across the loyalty dimension is not unidimensional but constructed of (at least) three distinct peaks (groups) across the spectrum. Using the overall median of appointee loyalty as a demarcation point, the distribution of appointees on the loyalty scale suggests that there is a cluster of appointees centered around 0.25—that is, appointees who are the "typical appointee" on the loyalty scale. A second group (with tallest peak) of appointees scores low (well below the median) on the loyalty scale (centered on 0.1), while a third group (with the shortest peak) exists to the left of the reference line, representing "strong loyalists." Given the presidency's historical emphasis on appointing loyalists to positions within the executive branch, it is interesting that this third group of "loyalists" spans a range from 0.3 to 1 on the loyalty scale. Presidents therefore have the ability to ask not merely whether an appointment promotes loyalty, they also can ask—or perhaps should ask—how much loyalty an appointee promotes, a point that we can derive from our analysis of loyalty as a continuous variable.

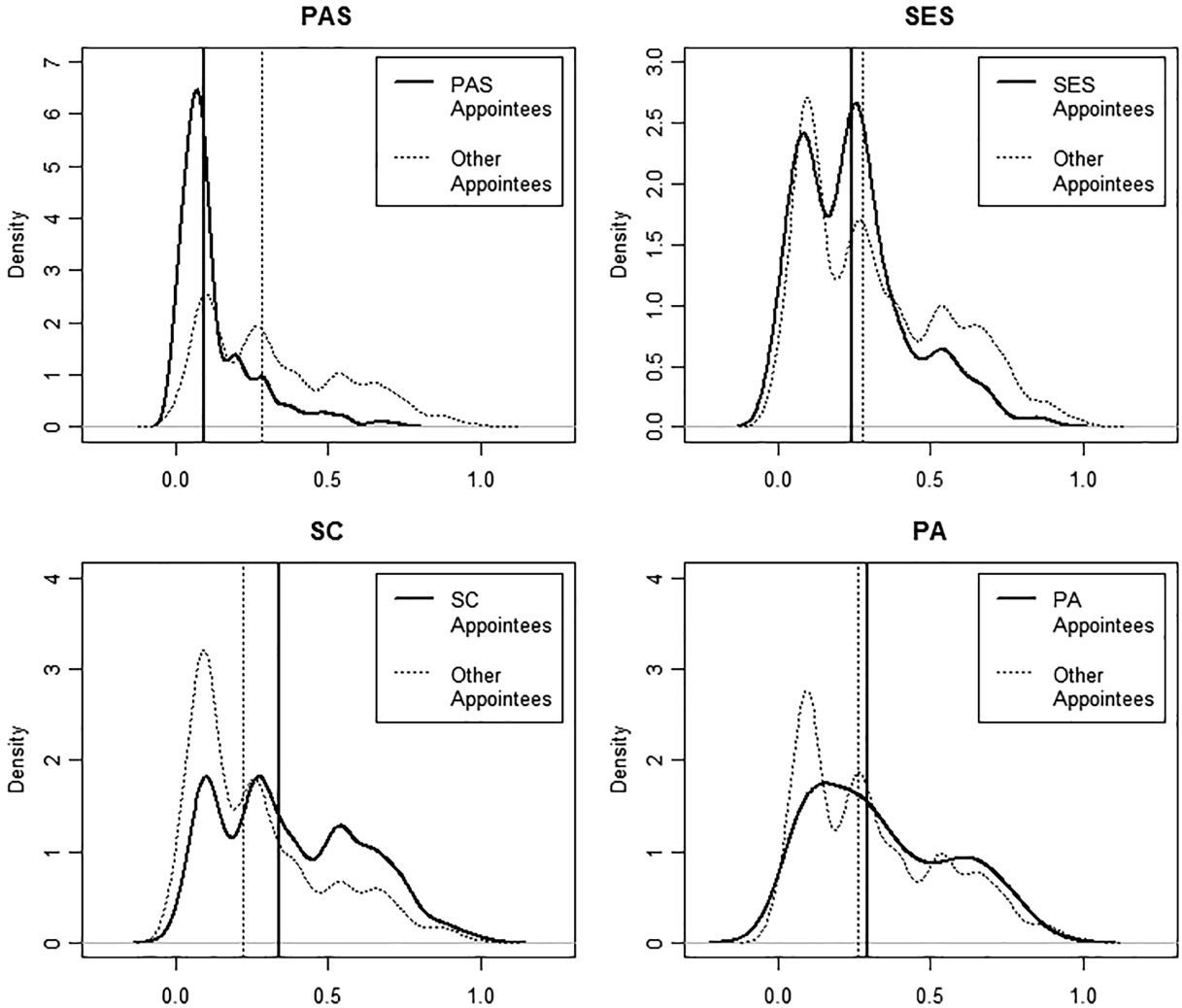
Figure 2(b) presents the distribution of appointees on the competence scale. It paints a striking picture on the quality of competency in presidential appointments. Again using median appointee competence as a reference point, figure 2(b) shows that a "typical appointee" in the Bush and Obama administrations, respectively, falls on the low end of the competence scale. In fact, if we exclude the leftmost (largest) cluster of appointees in figure 2(b),[7] we find that only 832 appointees exhibit higher than a typical level of appointee competence. In other words, only about one in four appointee résumés reflect qualifications that indicate a high level of competence.

Figure 2 includes all of the appointees. More telling about the president's overall appointment strategies than these aggregate distributions of appointee loyalty and competence is a nuanced assessment by the type of appointment. Figure 3 shows that in comparison with all other types of appointments, few PAS appointments rate as actual "loyalist" appointments. Of the 264 total PAS appointees in the data set, 226 of them (about 85.6 percent) score below the median on the loyalty scale. This is in comparison with the 60.6 percent of SES appointees, 44.6 percent of PA appointees, and 36.0 percent of Schedule C (SC) appointees



Notes: Figures 2a and 2b present the distributions (kernel densities) of estimated appointee loyalty and competence, respectively (two-factor confirmatory model). Reference line at the respective medians of appointee loyalty and appointee competence: median loyalty ≈ 0.26, median competence ≈ 0.10.

Figure 2 Distributions of Appointee Loyalty and Competence (Two-Factor Confirmatory Model)



Notes: This figure presents the distributions (kernel densities) of estimated appointee loyalty by appointment type. PAS = presidential appointment with Senate confirmation; PA = presidential appointment (no Senate confirmation required); SC = Schedule C appointment; SES = Senior Executive Service appointment. For each comparison, the reference group is appointees of other appointment types. Vertical reference lines indicate respective group medians. Group medians for loyalty are 0.09, 0.24, 0.34, and 0.29 for PAS, SES, SC, and PA appointees, respectively.

Figure 3 Distributions of Appointee Loyalty by Appointment Type

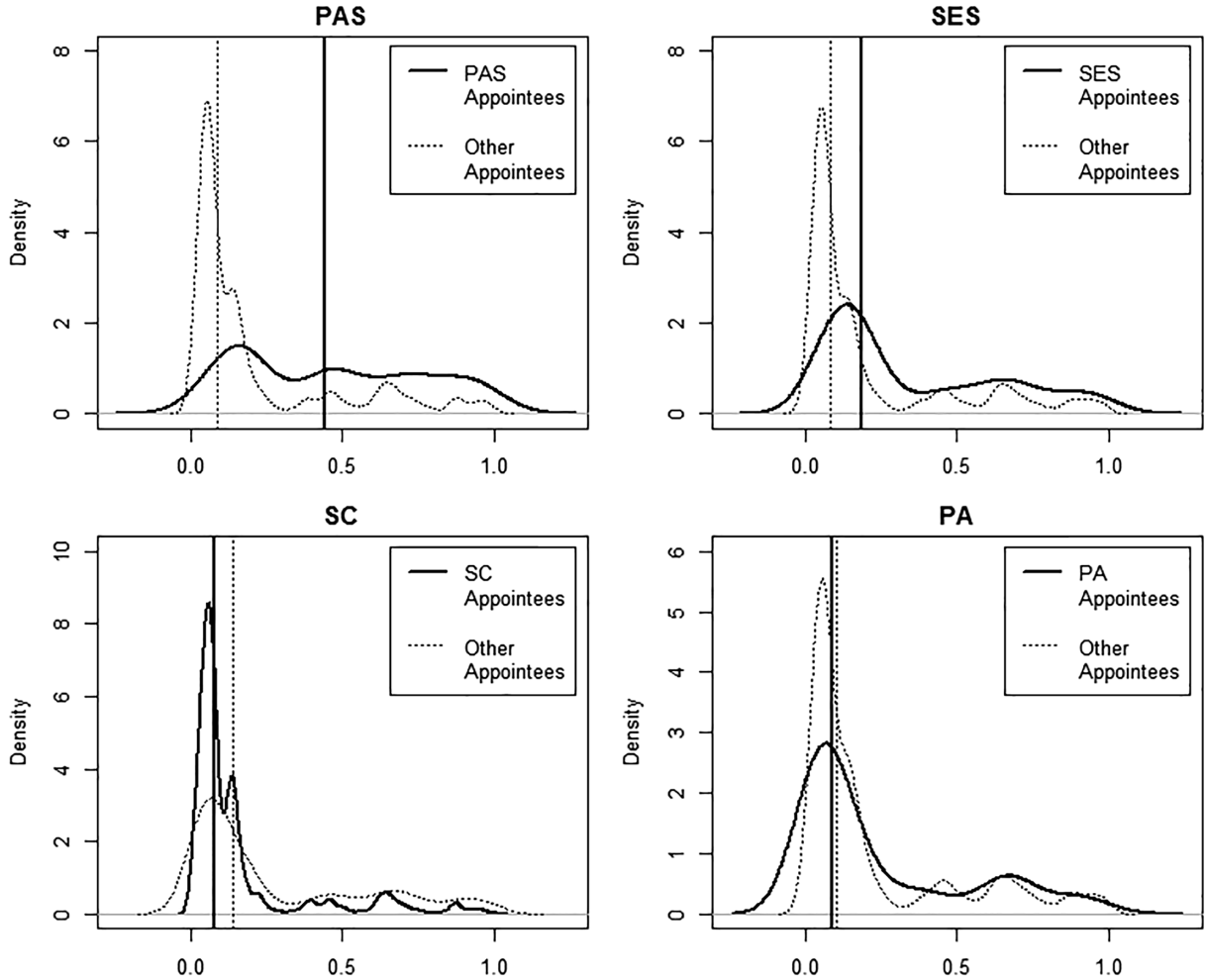
who also rate below the median on the loyalty scale. When we speak about concepts such as loyalty, these findings indicate that we need to consider the type of presidential appointment involved. If presidents secure lower levels of loyalty from their PAS appointees, they also likely use other types of appointments to promote loyalty to impact the bureaucracy.

With reference to figure 4, whereas PAS appointments are more likely to exhibit lower levels of loyalty, they rate higher on the competence scale; *92.4 percent of PAS appointments (244 out of 264) rate above the median appointee on the competence scale*. In fact, PAS appointees are more likely to score above average on the competence dimension than are any other appointment types. In comparison, 80.4 percent of SES appointees (341 of 424), 47.3 percent of PA appointees (53 of 112), and 40.4 percent of SC appointees (571 of 1,415) score higher than the median on competence. The high level of competence among SES appointees versus the low level for Schedule C appointees indicates that we need to consider these two types of non-PAS appointments quite differently. While both promote loyalty, the SC exhibit far less evidence of competence than SES appointees.

Overall, our initial look at appointee loyalty and competence suggests that the presidential appointment calculus is more complex than previously shown. In particular, while the overall emphasis on competence is lower than it is for loyalty, as scholars long have suggested, we find that presidents are more likely to reward competence in their PAS appointments, which is consistent with our expectations. Presidents then use other appointment types to promote a higher level of loyalty, though SES appointees provide a higher level of competence than SC appointments.

Our finding with regard to the SES is interesting because, as the Office of Personnel Management website states, SES was designed by the Civil Service Act of 1978 to be a blend of both loyalty and competence.[8] As noted,

> [T]he SES was established to " … ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality." These leaders possess well-honed executive skills and share a broad perspective



Notes: This figure presents the distributions (kernel densities) of estimated appointee competence, by appointment type. PAS = presidential appointment with Senate confirmation; PA = presidential appointment (no Senate confirmation required); SC = Schedule C appointment; SES = Senior Executive Service appointment. For each comparison, the reference group is appointees of other appointment types. Vertical reference lines indicate respective group medians. Group medians for competence are 0.44, 0.19, 0.07, and 0.08 for PAS, SES, SC, and PA appointees, respectively.

Figure 4 Distributions of Appointee Competence by Appointment Type

> on government and a public service commitment that is grounded in the Constitution. Members of the SES serve in the key positions just below the top Presidential appointees. SES members are the major link between these appointees and the rest of the Federal workforce. They operate and oversee nearly every government activity in approximately 75 Federal agencies.

Meanwhile, Schedule C appointments are the lowest level of political appointment. President George H. W. Bush's political strategist noted that Schedule C appointments should reward young campaign staffers (Wheaten 2016). Our findings therefore have considerable face validity in that both of our measures of loyalty and competence comport with prior expectations regarding PAS, SES, and Schedule C appointments. As for PA appointments, they fall between the SES and Schedule C appointments on both the loyalty and competency measures.

Most importantly, our comparison of these appointment types provides solid evidence that with PAS appointments, presidents either value competence or must consider the reaction of the Senate to an appointee without an appropriate level of experience and expertise. This finding suggests that the constitutionally prescribed Senate confirmation process provides a significant benefit in that it provides citizens with more competent federal appointees. It also provides a tangible constraint on presidents who desire loyalty in their appointments. As such, the Constitution contributes to a government run by more competent individuals than likely would be the case if there were no confirmation process. Hence, we find evidence that the Constitution provides a tangible check on presidential power and presidential preferences. It does not, however, preclude presidents from naming loyalists to the cabinet and other top-level positions. Rather, the confirmation process provides presidents with an incentive to consider both loyalty and competence in their PAS appointees.

The implications of our findings, using continuous measures of loyalty and competence, provide interesting insights into the nature of presidential incentives, checks and balances, and the Constitution's role in limiting presidential discretion while promoting better government. As Lewis (2003, 27) notes, "Presidents … want to be able to appoint officials to head

administrative agencies that are responsive to executive direction and able to direct the agencies and offices below them."[9] While these results are interesting, it may be that different presidents have different values for competence and loyalty when they select appointees. One can postulate that Bush favored loyalty more than Obama and that Obama favored competence more than loyalty. We turn to this possibility in the next section.

Bush versus Obama Appointees

How different are the appointees in the Bush administration versus those in the Obama administration? In the previous section, we found considerable variations in presidential appointments in terms of (1) the strategic choices presidents make in terms of loyalty and competence and (2) the differences in how presidents utilize Senate-confirmed versus non-Senate-confirmed positions. In this section, we continue the analysis by examining the differences in appointment strategy by the Bush administration versus that of the Obama administration.

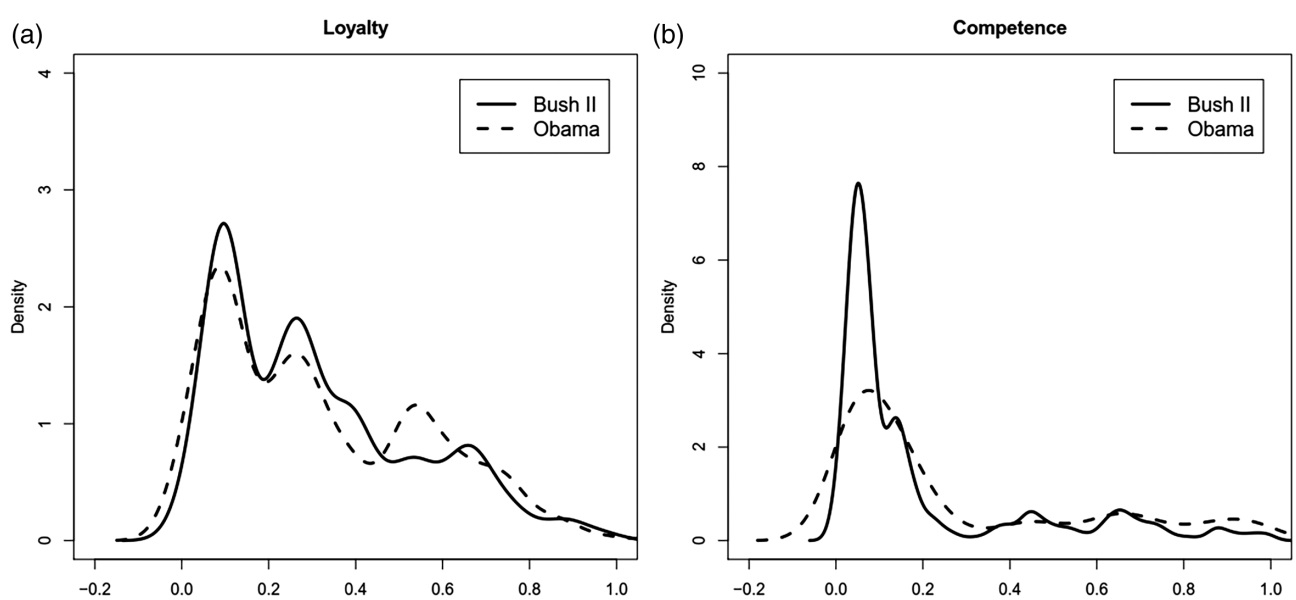
Figure 5 presents the distributions of appointee loyalty and competence (by president). Comparing across the Bush and Obama administrations, we find no notable differences in overall distribution of appointee loyalty. A *t*-test comparing the two distributions in figure 5(a) indicates that the difference is not statistically significant. However, we do find more Bush appointees on the lower end of the competence scale (i.e., less competent). The average competence for Bush appointees is 0.19, while the average for Obama appointees is 0.27. A *t*-test confirms that the difference is statistically significant.

Turning our attention to the differences in appointment type, figure 6 reveals striking similarities and differences across the two presidential administrations. First, most apparent in the distributions of PAS appointments on the loyalty dimension, the kernel densities exhibit a positive skew. That is, a larger portion of the mass is located on the lower end of the distribution—that is, lower on loyalty. This is true for both the Bush and Obama administrations. Second, there are significant variations in presidential strategy with respect to appointment type. Consider, for instance, Bush appointees on the loyalty dimension in figure 6(a). Not surprisingly, of the four types of appointments, *t*-tests reveal that Bush's PAS appointees rank the lowest on the loyalty scale, followed by SES appointments. We find no statistically significant difference on loyalty between Bush's SC and PA appointments, with these two appointment types representing his most loyal appointees. We find a largely similar pattern with respect to Obama's appointments. These results are consistent with our results from the previous section. Because of the lack of Senate confirmations for SES, PA, and Schedule C appointments, presidents prioritize these positions when they seek loyalists to the federal bureaucracy.

Furthermore, while there are similarities across the two administrations, there are some important differences. For instance, Obama appointees tend to score higher on the competence scale. With the exception of Schedule C appointees, the mean competence scores of Obama's PAS, SES, and PA appointees are significantly higher than those of Bush's respective appointments. More importantly, compared with his predecessor, Obama appears to take a different strategy with appointed positions within the White House (i.e., PA appointments). While Bush's PA appointments emphasize loyalty ($\text{Mean}_{\text{Loyalty (PA)}} > \text{Mean}_{\text{Competence (PA)}}$), Obama's appointees skew toward competence ($\text{Mean}_{\text{Loyalty (PA)}} < \text{Mean}_{\text{Competence (PA)}}$). As noted elsewhere in this article, presidents have incentives to prioritize certain types of appointees than others. In the case of PA appointments here, this may reflect differences in the priorities of the two administrations in regard to staffing the White House. In sum, while our expectations regarding the two presidents is confirmed with regard to competence, both presidents exhibit similar interests in loyalty.

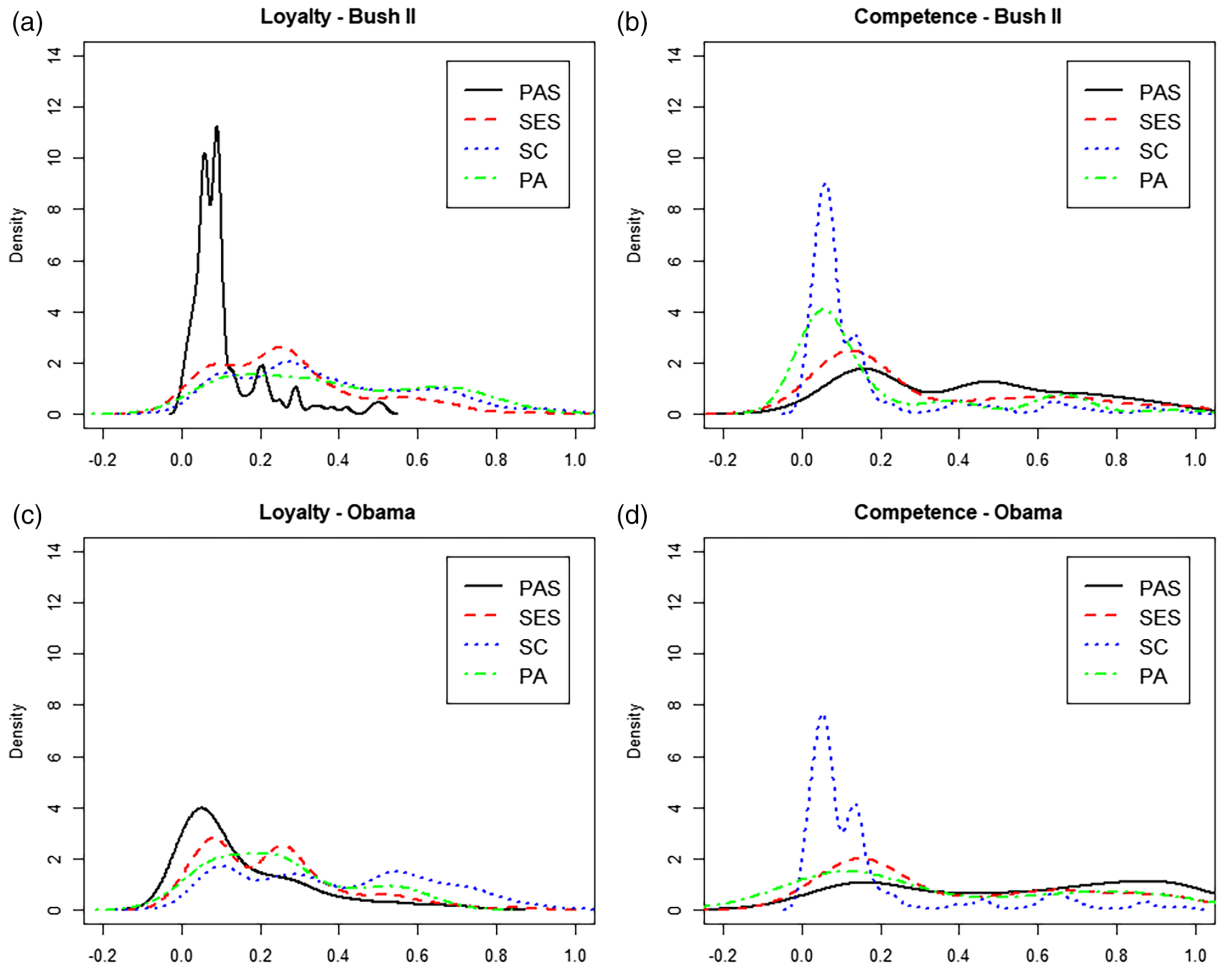
Loyalty versus Competence: A Strategic Approach

To this point, we have provided evidence that presidents do not employ any single strategy regarding presidential appointments—



Notes: This figure presents the distributions (kernel densities) of appointee loyalty and competence (by president).

Figure 5 Distribution of Loyalty and Competence by President



Notes: This figure presents the distributions (kernel densities) of appointee loyalty and competence (by president and appointment type).

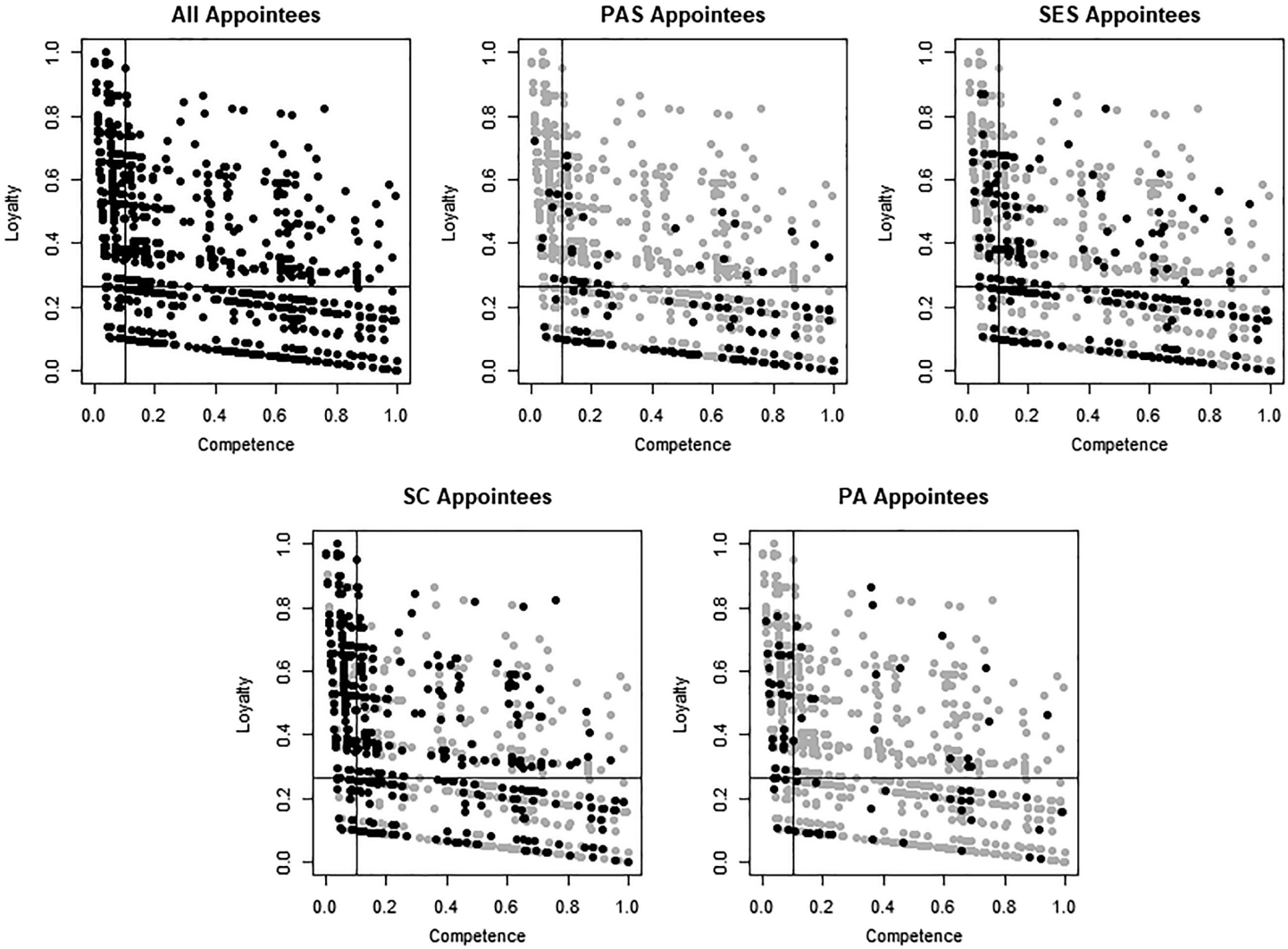
Figure 6 Distributions of Loyalty and Competence by President and Appointment Type

that is, they do not always promote loyalty over competence. Instead, presidents utilize a strategic approach when they make appointments that treats loyalty and competence differently when they make appointments at different levels; that is, when presidents appoint candidates to positions within the federal bureaucracy, they do so contingent on the type of appointment. But is there additional evidence that a trade-off exists? If so, for example, what must the president be willing to give up when they decide to emphasize an appointee's likelihood to comply with the president's policy goals when they wish to appoint someone who is more familiar and experienced with the policy goals of the agency to which they are appointed?

Figure 7 presents scatterplots of appointee loyalty on appointee competence, separated by appointment type. For ease of reference, we include reference lines on both the y-axis and the x-axis to indicate median appointee loyalty and appointee competence, respectively. The upper-left quadrant indicates appointees who score high on loyalty but low on competence. The lower-left quadrant presents appointees scoring low on both loyalty and competence dimensions. The upper-right quadrant represents appointees scoring high on loyalty and competence. The lower-right quadrant indicates appointees that score high on competence but low on loyalty.

As noted earlier, a relatively small group of appointees resides in the upper-right quadrant: high loyalty and high competence: approximately 10 percent of PAS, 28 percent of SES, 18 percent of Schedule C, and 19 percent of PA appointees.[10] Conversely, we can examine the proportion of appointees that fall in the lower-left quadrant (i.e., below the median on both loyalty and competence) across all appointment types. Of the 2,215 appointees, approximately 17 percent score below the median on both the loyalty and competence dimensions; 3 percent of total PAS, 8 percent of SES, 15 percent of Schedule C, and 15 percent of PA appointments. In other words, the number of appointees, regardless of appointment type, that are in either the high loyalty/high competence or the low loyalty/low competence categories is small.

Turning our attention to the two remaining categories (i.e., high loyalty/low competence and low loyalty/high competence), we get a closer view on the dynamics of the loyalty-competence trade-off in presidential appointments. Based on the percentages of appointees falling into each category, presidential appointments were largely made based on an appointee's perceived loyalty or competence, but not both. The numbers are staggering: 87 percent of PAS appointees, 64 percent of SES, 67 percent of Schedule C, and 66 percent of PA fall in either the upper-left (high on loyalty but low on competence) or the lower-right quadrant (high on competence



Notes: This figure presents scatterplots of appointee loyalty on appointee competence, separated by appointment type. Reference lines at on both x-axis and y-axis indicate median appointee competence and appointee loyalty, respectively. Using the reference lines as the baseline, upper-left quadrant indicates appointees who score high on loyalty but low on competence. Lower-left quadrant presents appointees scoring low on both loyalty and competence dimensions. Lower-right quadrant indicates appointees who score high on competence but low on loyalty. Upper-right quadrant represents appointees scoring high on both loyalty and competence.

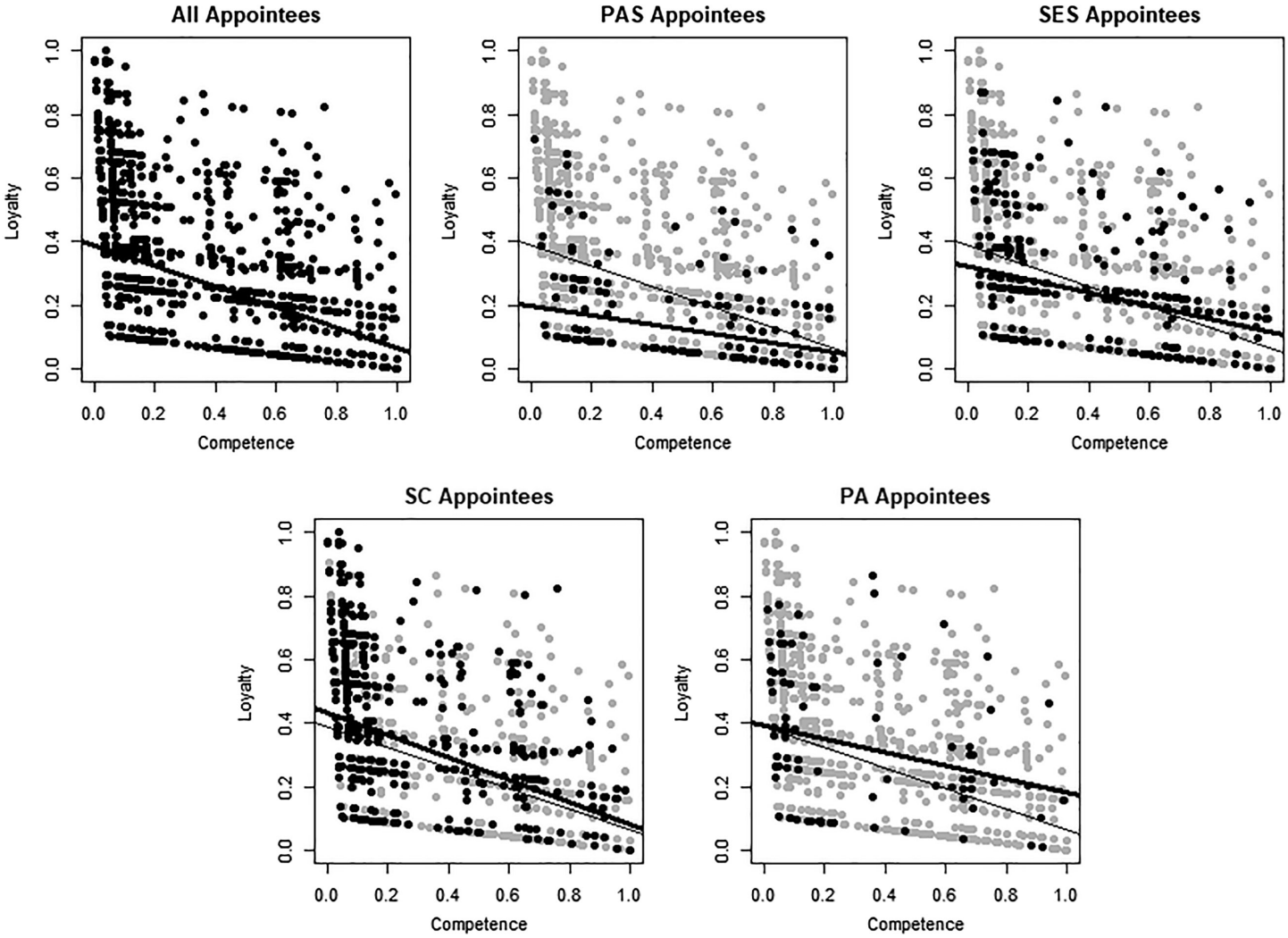
Figure 7 Emphasizing Loyalty or Competence

but low on loyalty). The evidence supports the conclusion that presidents do make a trade-off between loyalty and competence.

To determine a more exacting trade-off between loyalty and competence, figure 8 overlays regression lines on scatterplots of appointee loyalty and appointee competence, separated by appointment type. For each appointment type in figure 8, the bold line represents the regression coefficient using data on that subset of appointees (models 2–5 in table 2), while the thin line indicates the regression coefficient on loyalty-competence trade-off from the model using the full data set (model 1 in table 2). Table 2 presents the simple regression models results in table form. The dependent variable in all models is appointee loyalty. Model 1 presents the regression model on the full data set, while models 2–5 present regressions on subsets of the data by appointment type.

As illustrated in figure 8, emphasizing appointee competence comes at the price of a less "loyal" appointee. The decline is statistically significant. For the full data set of 3,366 appointees, moving from competence = 0 to competence = 1 is associated with a 0.32 decrease in appointee loyalty. Considering that the average appointee loyalty in our data set of 3,366 appointees is 0.31,[11] with minimum and maximum values of appointee loyalty at 0 and 1, respectively, this trade-off of loyalty in favor of competence is both statistically and substantively important.

As we compare the regression line of all appointees with the regressions based on individual appointment types, we see that the trade-off between appointee loyalty and competence varies across appointment types. Contingent on the type of appointment, presidents face a sharper drop-off in appointee loyalty, should they decide to emphasize an appointee's level of competency. Consider, for example, PAS appointees. As we discussed in previous sections, PAS appointees are frequently the most visible of all presidential appointments. These positions require confirmation by the Senate and represent the upper echelon of the federal bureaucracy. Yet these appointees, in comparison with Schedule C' and PA appointments, are among the least "loyal" to the president, although



Notes: This figure presents scatterplots of appointee loyalty and appointee competence with regression lines. Overall, as presidents seek more competent appointees for office, the trade-off is an on-average, steady decline in appointee loyalty. Regression table in table 2.

Figure 8 Loyalty versus Competence Trade-Offs (Regression Lines)

Table 2 Loyalty versus Competence Trade-Offs

	All	PAS	SES	SC	PA
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Competence	–0.32***	–0.14***	–0.21***	–0.36***	–0.21***
	(0.01)	(0.033)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.07)
Constant	0.39***	–0.20***	–0.32***	0.43***	0.39***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)
Observations	3,366	264	424	1,415	112
R^2	0.14	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.07

Notes: Linear regression models presented. Dependent variable is appointee loyalty. Model 1 presents regression model on full data set, while models 2–5 present regressions on subsets of the data by appointment type. Visualization of regressions in figure 7. PAS = presidential appointment with Senate confirmation; PA = presidential appointment (no Senate confirmation required); SC = Schedule C appointment; SES = Senior Executive Service appointment.
*p<.1; **p<.05; ***p<.01.

they are among the most capable in terms of competence. But why would presidents seem willing to make such trade-off in favor of competence for their most visible appointments, their top-level managers? Figure 8 (top center) presents some initial answers: presidents face the least amount of trade-off in loyalty when they emphasize the quality of competence in PAS appointments (model 2 in table 2) compared with other types of appointments—further evidence of the impact of constitutional constraints on the president's appointment power. On average, as we move from "least competence" to "most competence" on PAS appointees in the data set,[12] the decline in overall appointee loyalty is 0.14, compared with the 0.32 decrease for all appointees in the data set. Contrast this result with that Schedule C appointees who exhibit the sharpest trade-off in appointee loyalty versus competence (model 4 in table 2). Overall, the results suggest that trade-offs between loyalty and competence are contingent on appointment type and that, for certain appointments, presidents seem willing to sacrifice loyalty in favor of competence.[13]

The presidential appointment strategy, therefore, is not a function of any single objective, such as appointing just loyalists or competent policy persons. Rather, it is a complex strategy that has one main goal across agencies and appointment types: accomplishing the president's policy priorities within the constraints placed on the president by the Constitution and the law.[14] In this process, presidents use their various political appointment types

strategically to accomplish their objectives, though our finding with regard to PAS appointments indicates that the Constitution also provides a check on the president's ability to appoint loyalists to federal bureaucratic positions. Remarks by George W. Bush's director of presidential personnel Clay Johnson further emphasize that presidential strategy regarding appointments must be considered as a holistic process:

> What do we want the person in this job to accomplish in the next two, three, or four years that we will be here? … What kind of person do we think is best able to accomplish these goals, in general and in light of who else is on the team… . Of course politics has to be looked at, but you should look at that last… . If you start with the political determination, it will be entirely about patronage, and not about substance. (quoted in Patterson 2008, 97–98)

Overall, appointments are made with respect to the policy goals of the president. Then, in conjunction with recognizing who else is on the policy team (already in the agency or under consideration for an appointment), nominations will be made to construct a team of appointees that are both loyal to the president's agenda and competent to carry it out. As Patterson (2008, 98) notes, "if a cabinet secretary was a strong policy person but new to the city, the presidential personnel office would look for a deputy secretary who was well acquainted with the decisionmaking processes of Washington, and vice versa." Loyalists would also be placed in lower-level positions throughout the bureaucracy.

Discussion

In this article, we examine how the George W. Bush and the Barack Obama administrations used their appointment power to influence the federal bureaucracy. First, as past research finds, presidents do seek to control the bureaucracy, and they do so by appointing people who are loyal to the president's policy agenda. However, we echo Edwards (2001, 15) in noting that "loyalty is not enough." The federal bureaucracy is simply too massive, its needs too challenging, and its operations too complex for an unyielding focus on loyalty. We also demonstrate that the constitutional appointment process, which requires Senate confirmation of PAS appointments, limits presidential power, providing a palpable check and balance structure, thus providing incentives for the appointment of individuals with higher levels of competence. As a result, presidents are more likely to reward competence with their PAS appointments.

Second, we demonstrate variations in other types of appointments. SES appointments reflect a higher concern with competence than Schedule C or even PA appointments. These findings are consistent with much of the normative literature which notes that an emphasis on appointee loyalty to the exclusion of competence is an administration asking for trouble. While presidents prefer loyalty, they do reward competence in certain types of appointments. The question is what have past presidents done with respect to appointments and what can we learn from their successes and failures?

Third, we argue that to better understand the dynamics of presidential appointments, we must consider (1) the type of appointment and (2) the loyalty-competence trade-off. Our analysis, employing continuous variables to measure loyalty and competence, provides important insights regarding the differences between different types of appointments as well as the strategic choices that presidents make regarding a trade-off between loyalty and competence. Our analysis indicates that *a sole focus on PAS appointments provides a limited and distorted view of the president's appointment strategy*, because presidents are more likely to appoint more competent appointees when they face the constitutional constraint of a Senate confirmation process. When we use continuous measures to look at different types of appointments, however, we find that the level of loyalty and competence of presidential appointments varies, as do the constraints on the president's appointment choices.

Fourth, we find similarities and differences between a Republican president, George W. Bush, and a Democrat, Barack Obama. While there is no statistically difference between their appointments on the loyalty dimension, there are statistically observable differences with regard to competence, with Obama more likely to appoint individuals with higher levels of competence than Bush.

Finally, we find evidence of a trade-off between loyalty and competence. Only in a small number of cases do appointees demonstrate high levels of loyalty and competence. Instead, the bulk of presidential appointments prioritize one quality over another. Generally speaking, the more competent the appointee, the less loyal that appointee will be to the president's overall policy agenda.[15]

Our results provide solid evidence that increases our understanding of the presidential appointment calculus. Most importantly, we should consider loyalty and competence as continuous variables, rather than constants. When we do so, we find that there is considerable variation in the measures of loyalty and competence across appointment types and across presidencies (especially with regard to competence). While we only have data on two presidents serving contiguous terms, research on a broader range of presidential administrations is certainly required. In our continuing research, we will examine whether variations also occur across different federal departments, agencies, boards and commissions, as well how they may have changed over time across and during presidential administrations. Using continuous measures allows us to address such questions as how much loyalty does a president prefer for appointees in different agencies? It also provides additional insights regarding the nature of a trade-off between loyalty and competence. Both of these factors are the subjects of our continuing research.

Notes

1. Constraints on PAS appointment may change over time. For instance, a 2013 decision by the Democratic-majority Senate leadership eliminated the filibuster option to confirm nominees to executive branch positions. Because presidents no longer need a supermajority to confirm PAS appointments, PAS appointments are more susceptible to a strict loyalty test. Also, the ability to appoint personnel to serve as "acting" rather than permanent appointees may allow presidents to skirt senatorial scrutiny.
2. See https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/ (accessed May 11, 2020).

3. It is important to note that because we are unable to directly observe the loyalty and competence of presidential appointees, we use indicators based on the career paths of the appointees. This is consistent with recent works in the appointment literature. See, for instance, Krause and O'Connell (2016) and Ouyang, Hagland, and Waterman (2017).
4. Because of the wide diversity of federal agencies in the data set, the coding scheme used to code the résumé data follows the schemes used by previous scholars to ensure consistency across agencies. See, for instance, Lewis and Waterman (2013). For example, if appointees to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Endowments for the Arts, respectively, are denoted as having subject expertise in their appointed positions, this means that their respective résumés contain relevant information to justify the coding.
5. See appendix S1 in the Supporting Information for a list of agencies in the data set (ranked by number of appointees).
6. Using the blavaan package in R, we first replicated the analyses from Ouyang, Hagland, and Waterman (2017). We then generated measures of appointee loyalty and appointee competence using the set of 17 binary indicators of appointee characteristics.
7. Cutpoint at 0.3.
8. See https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/ (accessed May 11, 2020).
9. Presidents may also select nominees for reasons beyond loyalty or competence. For instance, President Trump made references to his "generals" and his first secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, being right "out of central casting."
10. Since we know the exact appointment type of only 2,215 appointees (out of a total of 3,366), this leaves 1,151 appointees excluded from our analyses in figures 6 and 7 and table 2. However, since it is much easier to identify middle- and upper-level positions that are PAS and SES appointments, it is likely that these appointees are Schedule C or PA appointments.
11. Average appointee loyalty ≈ 0.31 (all 3,366); average PAS appointee loyalty ≈ 0.13; average SES appointee loyalty ≈ 0.25; average Schedule C appointee loyalty ≈ 0.38; average PA appointee loyalty ≈ 0.34.
12. Moving from competence = 0 to competence = 1.
13. In other works in progress, we further examine the conditions under which presidents are likely to trade loyalty for competence, such as the type of agency involved in the appointment.
14. As our data set is constructed of appointments from only presidential administrations (George W. Bush and Barack Obama), we replicated the analysis in table 2, separated by administration. As shown in appendix S2 in the Supporting Information, though the Obama administration faced greater trade-offs between loyalty and competence, these trade-offs vary by appointment types. In PAS and Schedule C appointments, the trade-off is greater for the Obama administration than it is for Bush, whereas the trade-off for SES appointments is actually less for the Obama administration. Further, focusing on the Obama administration exclusively (PA appointments), we find no loyalty and competence trade-off. While exploring further why differences in loyalty and competence trade-off exist across presidential administrations is beyond the scope of this paper, results here nonetheless underscore a fundamental question in presidential appointment strategy: what are the president's priorities and how can appointments be utilized to help accomplish those goals?
15. To be clear, because our data consist of appointees' résumés, this may not be fully indicative of actual behavior.

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Supporting Information

A supplementary appendix may be found in the online version of this article at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/puar.13212/full.